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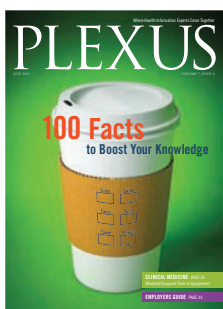
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1. Articles must be submitted in MS Word format and should not exceed 1500 words (some exceptions will be made depending on content).
2. Articles should include full name and contact information for each author/contributor as well as a brief bio (2–3 lines) for each author/contributor.
3. Consider including a 15- to 20-question multiple-choice quiz with your article to facilitate online continuing education (CE) access for credentialed MTs.
4. Articles must be submitted with a signed Author Agreement. An Author Agreement for both *Plexus* and *Matrix* can be requested from the senior communications coordinator at kwall@ahdionline.org.
5. Articles should be emailed to kwall@ahdionline.org.
6. Author Agreements should be signed and faxed to 209-527-9633 or scanned and emailed to kwall@ahdionline.org.

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Putting “Present” into Presence

An Inside-out Approach to Standing Out from the Crowd

1	CEC
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Most of us have had an experience of feeling powerful when speaking with others and also times when we felt invisible. There are people who turn heads when they enter a room and others you don't even notice.

Developing a strong presence has many angles, including how you look, how you talk, how you think, and how you act. The angle I'm focusing on in this article is how you think—what you can do to shift and expand your presence—from the inside-out.

As someone who holds the Master Certified Coach credential, I am aware of how my presence impacts my ability to gain the trust of my clients and be most effective in working with them to achieve successful outcomes. "Coaching Presence" is one of the International Coach Federation's core competencies, which coaches have to demonstrate in order to be assessed for a coaching credential. The Presence competency is described as an *"ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident."*

There are seven sub-points that describe the Coaching Presence competency in more detail. Below I describe these sub-points and how to apply them to increasing your personal presence, no matter who you are or what you do. A coach demonstrating presence:



1. Is present and flexible, dancing in the moment.

Our world provides many opportunities for distraction. We have smart phones, social media, the Internet, and busy lives. It takes conscious effort to be present enough to put all your attention on one thing at a time. But even more important is being consciously present with each person you encounter. In my work, I often encounter managers who say they are too busy to hold regular one-to-one direct report meetings. And when they do hold them, they allow their phone, text messages, or other interruptions to take priority. This communicates to their subordinate that they aren't as important as these other things, and often results in decreased trust and respect for the manager. Being flexible in this case may mean saying no to all distractions for 30 minutes.

Being present has the effect of grounding you with those you are engaging with and anyone observing you. When we live in the future—in our thoughts, ideas, and activities—we can appear "lightweight" in our energy. Being present grounds you in the "here and now," and that groundedness has a positive impact on others.

For example, in the healthcare documentation profession, MTs know how easy it is to go into "auto-pilot" mode while transcribing and editing. While the work is "routine," each patient and encounter is unique, and it is *vital*ly important to concentrate carefully on what the dictator is saying, along with any macros or normal templates being used, to ensure accuracy in patient records.

What opportunities do you have in your life for practicing being fully present in the moment?

Some things you know very well eventually become rote. Raising your awareness and bringing the activity to the foreground could make the activity feel brand new again.

Presence is enhanced when we take ourselves lightly and see humor in everyday life.



2. Accesses own intuition and trusts one's inner knowing (goes with the gut).

We all have intuition or a gut response to things. In a world that values the logical, our intuitive knowing can easily be drowned out and not given valid consideration. Yet great presence comes from being willing to trust your intuition and speak your truth in a way that resonates from deep within you. People who are in touch with and trust their intuitive responses exude a confidence that comes from deep within.

Do you trust your intuition and gut responses—enough to act on them?



3. Is open to not knowing and takes risks.

We live in a society that values knowing the answers, so it takes courage to be willing to say, “I don’t know the answer to [xyz].” When we’re present in the moment, feel grounded, trust our intuition and our gut, we become more comfortable with allowing curiosity to take over and taking risks.

For me, one of the most attractive qualities in a person is having curiosity about life. This curious nature translates into a vitality and presence grounded in core values of exploring and learning. A person is energetically more attractive when they embody being a “lifelong learner” rather than the persona of “I’m an expert and I know all I need to.”

Being self-defined as an expert can have a negative impact on others. One particular broadcaster on ESPN radio readily has an answer to everything, even when I think he couldn’t possibly be an expert on “that” subject as well. This gives me the impression that he is not open to learning from others or doesn’t value the viewpoint of others, including his talented co-host. I feel pushed away by this broadcaster’s energy, rather than pulled toward him, and after a few minutes of listening, I end up changing to another station—even though I love his co-host.

If you know what you stand for in terms of your personal and social values, you are more likely to trust yourself in not having everything figured out.

What are the top three personal and social values that you exude and are part of your personal presence?



If someone is passionate about something, their passion can be felt. We respond more easily to people who are in touch with their feelings and who engage us in an emotional way.



4. Sees many ways to work with the client and chooses in the moment what is most effective.

We become blinded by habitual ways of doing things. We live in our own paradigm, colored by the way we see the world. We think that everyone thinks and sees things the way we do...even when they don’t. We need to be willing to be open to differing viewpoints and allowing others to show us different ways of thinking and acting.

I worked with a senior technical manager who was exasperated by the “unwillingness of the younger generation” to take up training opportunities offered for free by their company, although outside of work hours.

In a coaching session I asked him, “How would these younger people design the training?” He didn’t know, nor had he ever thought to ask them. These are the future leaders of their industry, so if there is resistance, it makes sense to ask them how they would design training they would want to participate in. So his action step was simple: Ask the younger employees how they’d design and deliver the training.

In our next conversation, the manager reported that he had a very enlightening conversation with the younger employees and they were currently redesigning their training so that it utilized technology not previously tried. I felt the energy and excitement in his presence, borne out of collaboration with his younger employees.

Where might you have become blinded by your way of doing things?



5. Uses humor effectively to create lightness and energy.

Appropriate humor is a great way to break the ice. In presentations, I like to use a picture, video, or commercial that makes a relevant point in a fun way. Presence is enhanced when we take ourselves lightly and see humor in everyday life. Even with serious topics, a good sense of humor goes a long way to building memorable connections to you as a person, thereby enhancing your positive presence.

Where can you “lighten up” a bit more?



6. Confidently shifts perspectives and experiments with new possibilities for own action.

We can become rigid in our thinking to the point where we negate other ways of thinking about an issue.

I coached a project manager on expanding his ability to be influential with his people using communication skills. I'll call him Shane. Shane lacked confidence. When I met him, he almost whispered and swallowed his words, so he was hard to hear. His body language was closed, his shoulders were dropped forward, and his chest was collapsed.

After some discussion, he said he was self-conscious because English wasn't his first language. Yet, I found his English to be excellent and easy to understand. Once I gave him this feedback, I could see him thinking deeply about this. The next time we met, he entered the meeting room and seemed a few inches taller. He greeted me with a stronger handshake, and he spoke louder. A few months later, Shane reported with enthusiasm that he was regularly recording his voice and listening to how he sounded.

One of the areas of focus in our coaching was building his presence and being more visible in meetings—vocally and physically. A client Shane regularly met with noticed his increased confidence and told him how much happier and confident he was in having him manage his project. The level of trust and respect went up, not only with the client but also with all the people Shane managed directly and indirectly.

How confident are you in the way you sound? Does your voice reflect an inner confidence?



7. Demonstrates confidence in working with strong emotions, can self-manage and not be overpowered or enmeshed by client's emotions.

Emotions, or feelings, are a natural part of us. Feelings animate us and give us character. If we see a happy person, we can feel their happiness. If someone is upset or angry, we feel that too. If someone is passionate about something, their passion can be felt. We respond more easily to people who are in touch with their feelings and who engage us in an emotional way. Some of the most popular videos on YouTube, for example, involve babies or animals doing something that brings out our emotions. We like to feel!

It takes presence to be with people who are feeling strong emotions, especially if they are sad, in grief, or angry.

How comfortable are you with showing a range of your emotions? How comfortable are you in working with others showing strong emotion?

If you're interested in finding out more about working with emotions in the workplace, I recommend the book *Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers* by Anthony Mersin, PMP.

Developing presence from the inside-out is a wondrous journey of self-discovery, self-acceptance, and satisfaction. **P**

REFERENCE

1. International Coach Federation (ICF) core coaching competencies; <http://www.coachfederation.org/icfcredentials/core-competencies/>

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